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Right man for the right job

WASHINGTON—If President Reagan had a magic lamp, he could not have conjured up a better genie than Frank Carlucci, the man he named yesterday to be his new national security adviser.

In one stroke, Reagan solves the key problems that were threatening to blight his presidency: He fills the void at the National Security Council, and he trims the power of the increasingly arrogant and independent princes of his administration—chief of staff Donald Regan, CIA Director William Casey, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and Secretary of State Shultz.

Start with the NSC. Reagan has replaced an ineffective and inexperienced national security adviser, John Poindexter, with a tough professional who knows how to protect his country, his boss and himself. Poindexter created the greatest crisis of the Reagan presidency by never inquiring into—and never reporting to the President—the full details of Lt. Col. Oliver North's secret cash flow from Iran to the Nicaraguan Contras.

"If anybody tries those tricks on Carlucci's watch, he'll throw them out of a window," says Robert Hunter, an NSC veteran of the Carter administration. "If he has to, he'll crack heads."

On to State. After the befuddled

summit at Reykjavik and the fiasco of Iran, Reagan bounces back by keeping firm control of foreign affairs at the White House. For a moment, Secretary of State Shultz appeared to be off and running with his own foreign policy. Carlucci, a career Foreign Service officer, has more foreign experience than Shultz and most of his staff—and he will be at the President's side.

On to Defense. With Carlucci in the White House, Reagan sets the stage for a more rational and successful defense buildup. For the past six years, Defense Secretary Weinberger has repeatedly gone to Congress with unrealistic requests for more money—and then let Congress cut both the funds and the defense programs higgledy-piggledy, with no coherent strategy.

Carlucci, who was Weinberger's deputy at the Pentagon from 1981 to 1983, favors a defense buildup, but he told senators at his confirmation hearings in 1981 that there was no way the Pentagon could "spend every dollar some people want to spend on defense." Look for a more rational approach.

On to the CIA. Reagan now has an experienced and skeptical adviser to deflect madcap schemes for covert operations like the Iranian arms sale. As deputy CIA director during the Carter years, Carlucci ran "one of the

riskiest covert actions we undertook," former CIA director Stansfield Turner said yesterday. "But both he and I resisted covert operations that were not founded on our basic foreign policy interests."

Finally, into the center of power at the White House, where Don Regan has taken charge of virtually all operations, foreign and domestic. Carlucci will not report to Reagan through Regan. And he's not going to get bullied, shouted down, shot down or ground down in intramural squabbles.

How tough is Frank Carlucci? He was stabbed in the back in a brawl in the Congo in 1960 as he saved a Navy driver from an infuriated mob. As a 44-year-old ambassador to Lisbon in 1974, he defied then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and persuaded him to defeat communism in Portugal by backing a moderate Socialist government.

In addition, says Stansfield Turner, Carlucci "is a man of impeccable integrity, an excellent conciliator and very sensitive toward the workings of Congress."

Those are all his good qualities. Now for his drawbacks. How does a man of Carlucci's experience support Reagan's far-fetched plan for a leakproof shield against nuclear missiles? How does a Carlucci advise the President when he dreams that democracy can be restored to Nicaragua by giving just another \$100 million to Comandante Yahoo and the Manana Liberation Army?

Tough days are ahead for America, the President and for Frank Carlucci. He's a good man for tough days.